The Cheerful Letter

EVERY PLACE A CHURCH; EVERY DAY THE LORD'S DAY; ALL EVENTS BLESSINGS; ALL JOY THANKSGIVING; AND ALL NATURE AND LIFE FULL OF GOD.—*James Freeman Clarke.*

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THE CHEERFUL LETTER.

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THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL.

. . . . . .

There was never a leaf on bush or tree,
The bare boughs rattled shudderingly;
The river was dumb and could not speak,
For the weaver Winter its shroud had spun;
A single crow on the tree-top bleak
From his shining feathers shed off the cold sun;
Again it was morning, but shrunk and cold,
As if her veins were sapless and old,
And she rose up decrepitly
For a last dim look at earth and sea.

. . . . . .

Sir Launfal's raiment, thin and spare,
Was idle mail 'gainst the barbéd air;
For it was just at the Christmas time.
So he mused, as he sat, of a sunnier clime,
And sought for a shelter from cold and snow
In the light and warmth of long-ago.

. . . . . .

"For Christ's sweet sake I beg an alms";—
The happy camels may reach the spring,
But Sir Launfal sees only the grewsome thing,
The leper, lank as the rain-blanched bone,
That cowers beside him, a thing as lone
And white as the ice-isles of northern seas,
In the desolate horror of his disease.

And Sir Launfal said, "I behold in thee
An image of Him who died on the tree;
Thou also hast had thy crown of thorns,—
Thou also hast had the world's buffets and scorns,—
And to thy life were not denied
The wounds in the hands and feet and side:
Mild Mary's Son, acknowledge me;
Behold, through him, I give to thee!"

. . . . . .

'Twas a mouldy crust of coarse brown bread,
'Twas water out of a wooden bowl,—
Yet with fine wheaten bread was the leper fed,
And 'twas red wine he drank with his thirsty soul.

As Sir Launfal mused with a downcast face,
A light shone round about the place;
The leper no longer crouched at his side,
But stood before him glorified,
Shining and tall and fair and straight
As the pillar that stood by the Beautiful Gate,—
Himself the Gate whereby men can
Enter the temple of God in Man.

His words were shed softer than leaves from the pine,
And they fell on Sir Launfal as snows on the brine,
That mingle their softness and quiet in one
With the shaggy unrest they float down upon;
And the voice that was calmer than silence said,
"Lo, it is I: be not afraid!
In many climes, without avail,
Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;
Behold, it is here,— this cup which thou
Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now;
This crust is my body broken for thee,
This water His blood that died on the tree;
The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
In whatso we share with another's need;
Not what we give, but what we share,—
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,—
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me."

— *James Russell Lowell, in "The Vision of Sir Launfal."*

THE INCARNATION.

The burning questions of the religion of our time,—are they not such as these: How can we have any knowledge of God? What is the connection between the Lord of Life and this world of ours, this human nature of ours? With all our added knowledge of the material world, we still see no more of God in it than did the men of old. Creation veils its Author as much as it reveals him. With all our new and subtle knowledge of human life and history, of the complexity of human passions and earthly conditions of human existence, we still feel the weakness and imperfection of our nature; and still, as much as the psalmist or preacher of a simpler age, our heart and our flesh cry out for the living God.

Now, in the character of Jesus we are brought face to face with a man to whom the living God was a presence infinitely real. The very air he breathed was but the symbol to his thought of the life and spirit of God, as entering into his own life and spirit, and making him partaker of the infinite. He could not see a sparrow fall, or a flower spring up in the field, without seeing in them the witness of an omnipresent love, an all-embracing law of life. Every thought in his mind, every desire in his heart, was lifted at its very birth far out of the sphere of passion and selfishness, and became part of the "*word* of God," and of the "*will* of God," as of a divine truth and divine power of which he was but the instrument.

And in what terms does he teach us of this life of God, of which we are the children, from which we spring, to which we aspire, and in which we are new-created and redeemed from infirmity and sin? Not in the language of metaphysics does Jesus speak to us of the Father in heaven,—not as an abstract essence or ineffable substance,—but as the source of love, life, blessing, and power, as perfect holiness and untiring compassion, as self-communicating love and victorious righteousness. Not far away, in unapproachable glory, but visiting lowly hearts, humbling the proud and sinful, leading us into truth, and giving us peace and joy. To know God is to *have* eternal life springing up within the soul, like fresh waters from the deep places of the rock. He gives to them that ask him, and opens the door to every hungry, heavy-laden soul that knocks to enter in.

And how is this God, whose name is love, and whose being is holiness, ever revealed to us? Simply because our humanity in its fulness is in the divine image. We are "children of the highest." Even in our wanderings and our rebellion God never forgets us. We cannot cut ourselves off from his redeeming power and long-suffering compassion. The wretchedness and misery of wrong-doing plead with us for holiness and obedience. The darkness round us makes us yearn for light. Feeding on the husks the swine did eat calls us back to our Father's house, and gives us our birthright of true joy. And how do we come into this knowledge of God's love? It is as in our own hearts we express these divine attributes that we know them as divine.

Therefore, as you forgive one another, you learn what God's forgiveness is. As you learn the joy of giving, and that the highest life is self-communication, the utterance of truth, imparting of life to life, as you enter into holiness and purity, having your life all order, and expressing the dominion of spirit over flesh,— in short, as you become loving, wise, and spiritually victorious,—you feel that all this human love, wisdom, and holiness is but a reflection of, or rather a following after, a divine life. You become *fellow-workers* and *builders* with God. It is God's love that rises in your heart, and sends you to your brother, ready for the uttermost service: it is God's truth and God's wisdom that clear your mind of prejudice and partiality, and give you the true light. It is the creative spirit of God—the same that brooded over chaos—which, working through your conscience and your right arm, and through all your human endeavors, uses your little life as an instrument to lift all life forward in the unfolding creation of good by which the divine mind is progressively revealed. Be loving, that you may know the love of God; be true, that you may know God's truth. Strive and pray for the kingdom of God, that you may know God is king indeed.

In other words, man learns of God by what is most God-like in his own nature. No man knoweth the Father but the Son.

He that hath the Son hath the Father also. Man knows God because man is made in the image of God. Is not this truth in harmony with all that we know both of God and man? We apprehend by the power of communion and receptivity. The eye cannot receive sound, nor the ear light. The sunlight must fall upon the crystal lenses that yield to it, and the music must throb and thrill in a mechanism that is responsive to such vibrations. And so our knowledge of God's spiritual attributes must come to us through spiritual discernments. The power of God and his infinite greatness the very devils can perceive, though they tremble; but, to know God as Father of love, forgiveness, holiness, and spiritual joy, we must look up to him with the eyes of Christ. We must, like the child angels, behold the face of our Father in heaven with something of the original innocence in which he created us. This revealing of God through the fulness of our humanity is the true *Incarnation*, the word made flesh and dwelling among us.

Yet we should greatly misapprehend this truth of God in man and man in God if we think of this revelation and this indwelling as finished and fulfilled even in that wonderful life of Jesus. The Church's earliest thought of the incarnation, as it appears in the Gospel of John, is far larger and deeper than that. The incarnation is progressive. The whole company of faithful souls are the body of Christ: his flesh and blood are become the life of the world. These warm and daring metaphors have been cooled down from poetry to prose; and what was once clear and intelligible, because it was the language of the heart, becomes in the dogmas of theology utterly meaningless and obscure.

Are we so much the slaves of words that we can no longer understand the spiritual realities which underlie them? Can we not understand that *religion* speaks the language not of metaphysical logic, but of the affections and the soul? The first Christians felt themselves *one in Christ*, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, as having Christ formed in them, and as coming to the Father through him. As we enter into the fulness of a Christ-like life, as we become followers of God and receivers of the divine, we also enter into the *communion* of saints. Our individualities, the things that divide and separate us from each other, are all on the lower plane of sense and self. In the highest part of our natures we become sharers of the life of God, one with each other and with him. Just as friends who are separated by seas and mountains promise to look up to the same star and be together in spirit, so in all our life it is the earthly that divides, but the heavenly that brings us into communion. Thus it is that the higher humanity which we see in Christ, the love of truth that leads us to God, the endeavors and the sacrifices that make us fellow-laborers with and instruments of Divine Providence,—all reveal to us our common nature, and make us "one in God."

In your philosophy the perception that God is all in all is but an abstraction of the intellect, the barren pantheism of metaphysics; but the higher pantheism, the pantheism of Christian life, is a moral experience. We rise to this illuminating vision of the indwelling God, not by logic, but by dying to self and sin, and by setting all our thoughts and passions in harmony with the divine law of life.

There is, moreover, another aspect of the incarnation peculiarly dear to the Christian heart: that hereby not only is our human nature lifted up to God, but God comes down to us. It stands for the infinite condescension of God. Even in its crudest form there is a moral sublimity in this idea.

Is there not a profound truth in it which no religious mind can ever outgrow? Namely, that the highest life of the soul is not the mere strife upward of our human will, but the descending from above of heavenly gift and power. Holiness is like genius: it must be trained and ripened by effort, but in the supreme manifestation there is something present which no human striving could produce. The very word *genius* implies the working through the human mind of some divine beauty and light. Now, in the moral and spiritual perfection of our humanity there is this same perception that the spirit has descended. The dove flies down from the sky, and the tongues of heavenly flame settle upon holy brows. In Jesus we have the memorable manifestation of a life which in the moral and spiritual sphere is full of this divine activity. When we see the brightest human

excellence, we praise not the human possessor of it, but the divine Author of it. The holiness and the love of Christ have this majestic quality. You could not praise him for being what he was, more than you could compliment a mountain for its grandeur. When we see such a perfect humanity as his, we give glory to the Father alone. Could you praise a star for shining? Could you praise that wonderful mother love that, like an angel's wings, folds round each new life that enters into this world? Could you praise the new poet when his soul is all throbbing with the music of great thoughts? All these highest, holiest things compel us to look beyond themselves to the divine life of which they are the manifestation. So it is with Jesus. His nature and his word have this absoluteness of quality which make them a revelation of the eternal.

Have you not in your own life this consciousness that the best gifts are from above? Have you not seen in those you love that their highest and most lovable qualities seem hardly their own, but the working in them of the Lord and Giver of Life? I say again that, when I see in any human creature the highest and most admirable qualities, I do not thank or compliment him; but I praise God. I think this is one of the things that people mean by ascribing divinity to Jesus.

Let us make real to ourselves this eternal process by which the word is made flesh, and the divine tabernacled in the human. The human soul can purify itself to be a temple of the Holy Ghost, a revelation of God,—that is one-half of the truth; and the Divine Life and Love and Beauty do really descend and take possession of our poor human lives,—that is the second half of it.

Remember, too, that Divine Life thus descends to every part of our humanity. The spirit does not rest upon the mountain-tops, but comes gently down to bring order, peace, and power to every faculty of our natures. No part of us is shut out from God. The word is made *flesh*. There is not, as we feebly fear, some part of us which belongs to heaven, and another which is wholly of the earth and earthy. It is the will of God that our whole nature, body, mind, soul, and spirit, should be redeemed to his service, and made glad and holy through his presence. This is the true Incarnation, man lifting up his heart to God, God coming down to man and taking *entire* possession of his creature. This is the birth of Christ in every soul.

God grant that in this coming Christmas Day we may have some new experience of what it means to be born like Jesus of old,—a Son of the Living God! — *Theodore C. Williams.*

THE STILL HOUR.

OUR MASTER.

No fable old nor mythic lore,
Nor dream of bards and seers;
No dead fact stranded on the shore
Of the oblivious years.

But warm, sweet, tender, even yet
A present help is he;
And faith has still its Olivet,
And love its Galilee.

The healing of his seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain;
We touch him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again.

Through him the first fond prayers are said
Our lips of childhood frame;
The last low whispers of our dead
Are burdened with his name.

We faintly hear, we dimly see,
In differing phrase we pray;
But, dim or clear, we own in thee
The Light, the Truth, the Way!

O Lord and Master of us all!
Whate'er our name or sign,
We own thy sway, we hear thy call,
We test our lives by thine.

To thee, our full humanity,
Its joys and pains, belong;
The wrong of man to man, on thee
Inflicts a deeper wrong.

Who hates, hates thee; who loves, becomes
Therein to thee allied;
All sweet accords of hearts and homes
In thee are multiplied.

Deep strike thy root, O heavenly Vine,
Within our earthly sod,
Most human, and yet most divine,
The flower of man and God!

Alone, O Love ineffable!
Thy saving name is given;
To turn aside from thee is hell,
To walk with thee is heaven!

—*John G. Whittier.*

The wonderful works, knowledge, character, of Jesus are not unnatural, but natural: they are not exceptional, but prophetic. What he was all men may become. He is the type of humanity, the example of its fully unfolded condition. Jesus came to help others to become what he was. So far from regarding him as exceptional, the Gospels and Epistles teach that everything Jesus was we are to be. Those who commune with him by faith shall gradually be changed into the same image, and grow up into the stature of Jesus Christ.

We have four central ideas undoubtedly present to the mind of Jesus,— his faith in the fatherly love of God; his trust in the all-conquering power of truth; the breadth of his human sympathy; and his mission to the sinful and abandoned.

The doctrine of Christianity is not that we are to call all men our brothers, but to treat them as such. No good is done by saying that a man is our brother, if he has no brotherly feeling to us nor we to him. But Jesus taught that outside of every boundary, outside of every race, party, creed, there was this possibility of brotherhood. It is our business to believe in that root and to develop that fruit. It does not fulfil our duty to say, "Brother! brother!" any more than to say, "Lord! Lord!" There may be just as much cant in one as in the other.

Of all the holy things which God has made, the most holy is man himself. He is the temple of God; for the spirit of God dwells in him, and wherever a human being stands there stands something greater than the Temple at Jerusalem. God has made man in his own image, with power of insight, capacity for love, energy of action. The mysterious depths and heights of his nature we do not yet half understand. His experience in this world has meanings and objects of which as yet we have hardly an idea. His destiny in the other world, the height of being which he shall climb, eternity alone can reveal.

All souls belong to God by redemption. The work of Christ is for all: he died for all, the just and the unjust, that he might bring them to God. He came to reconcile all things unto God. Christ did not die for the great and the distinguished only, nor for the good and pure only, but for the most humble, neglected, and forlorn. The light streaming from his cross reveals in every soul a priceless treasure, dear to God, which he will not willingly lose. The value of a single soul in the eyes of God has been illustrated by the coming of Jesus as in no other way. The recognition of this value is a feature peculiar to Christianity. To be the means of converting a single soul, to put a single soul in the right way, has been considered a sufficient reward for the labors of the most devoted genius and the ripest culture. To rescue those who have sunk the lowest in sin and shame has been the especial work of the Christian philanthropist. To preach the loftiest truths of the gospel to the most debased and savage tribes in the far Pacific has been the chosen work of the Christian missionary. In this they have caught the spirit of the gospel. God said, "I will send my Son." He chose the loftiest being for the lowliest work, and thus taught us how he values the redemption of that soul which is the heritage of all.

"All souls are *mine*." Blessed declaration of the God-inspired Ezekiel! All souls,— of the great and the humble, the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant, the king and the slave, the pure child and the abandoned woman, the soul of the apostle John and the soul of Judas Iscariot,—all belong to God. He will take care of what is his: he will leave no child orphaned. Those who are trodden down and forsaken in this world,—he watches their sorrowful lives, and will cause them to bring forth fruit at last. Thus does God love all souls with a universal, unwearied, untired affection. Thus did Christ love all souls, gathering around him the publicans, Pharisees and sinners, the pious and the profane. And thus, if we are Christians, we shall love all souls, calling no man common or unclean, believing in the brotherhood of the race, finding something good in every one,—a vital seed of nobleness in the most deadened

bosom; and, in thus loving other souls, our own souls will be blessed. While we forget ourselves, God will remember us. While we seek to save others, we, too, shall be safe.

Jesus came to gather up the fragments of human virtue, love, and goodness, that nothing should be lost. There are always some fragments of good in every heart. God's great law of economy applies to these. If he does not allow a comet to wander hopelessly away into emptiness, but sends the great archangel, gravitation, to bring it back, he will not let a soul, made in his own image, go off on any fatal erratic curve into outer darkness. The great archangel Love shall pursue the lost souls, and find them. That is what Christianity teaches. The Son of Man comes to seek and save the lost.

If he had pity on the fragments of bread, will he not pity the fragments of broken minds and broken hearts? He does. He does not choose to drink the cup of joy alone in the kingdom of God. He cannot be happy there, unless you and I are there with him. He cannot be happy there, unless we bring with us our lost brethren and sisters who are perishing around us for lack of a little love. Has God sent Christ to seek and save the lost? and shall he not find them and save them?

Let the best love unto the lowliest go,
The highest comfort to the deepest woe,
The purest light shine in the darkest place,—
Earth's noblest culture aid the human race;
For God came down in Christ, to seek and save
The beggar, sinner, publican, and slave.
—*James Freeman Clarke.*

THE BOOK AND MAGAZINE CLUB.

[*Send all matter for this department to Mrs. W. B. Nichols, 3 Webster Street, Allston, Mass.*]

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Mrs. E. M. Shumway, 415 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, Mass., offers a few unbound volumes of the *Art Amateur.*

Mrs. Julia E. Merriam, Pequabuck, Connecticut, offers *Review of Reviews*, 1893; also back numbers of *Ladies' Home Journal*, 1891 to 1894.

The *Christian Register* is offered by Mrs. W. B. Nichols, 3 Webster Street, Allston.

Books in Loan Library of Miss Frances H. Curtis, 445 Centre Street, Jamaica Plain, Mass.: "Tanglewood Tales," Hawthorne; "An Unlessoned Girl," E. K. Tompkins; "Young Folks' History of Greece," Yonge; "Red Eric," Ballantyne; "The Naulahka," Rudyard Kipling; "Age of Chivalry," T. Bulfinch; "Massachusetts: Its Historians and its History," C. F. Adams; "Little Flowers of Saint Francis," Abby L. Alger; "Society and Solitude," R. W. Emerson; "Reveries of a Bachelor," Ik Marvel; "In Old New England," Hezekiah Butterworth.

Miss L. Freeman Clarke, Jamaica Plain, Mass., will *lend* "The Wide, Wide World" and "Shirley," but has had too many requests to give them to all applicants. Those who have sent requests will receive them in turn, and are kindly requested to return them in a week, or a fortnight at latest.

REQUESTS.

READ DIRECTIONS AT BEGINNING OF BOOK CLUB BEFORE WRITING.

Libraries.

Standing requests for libraries from:—

Rev. George H. Taylor, Rocky Ford, Colorado;

Mrs. O. A. Langston, Sidney, Comanche County, Texas;

Mrs. C. S. Stowell, Magnolia, Boulder County, Colorado;

Mr. Davis M'Carn, Anamosa, Iowa;

Mrs. D. Jayne, Cayuta, Schuyler County, New York;

Mrs. Emma Miner, Lisbon, New Hampshire;

Stephen D. Rhoden, La Pine, Crenshaw County, Alabama;

Mrs. Isadore E. Rice, Oakland, Oregon.

Mrs. Stowell and Mrs. Jayne need children's books. Mrs. Stowell also asks for books for a mining population (many are educated people). Mr. Graves asks for a Sunday-school and parish library, Mr. Rhoden for an industrial school for colored children.

(If any address is omitted that should be

in this list of standing requests, we shall be glad to insert it in the next number.)

Books for the Anamosa Church Library, formerly sent to Rev. Charles Graves, may now be sent to Mr. Davis M'Carn, Anamosa, Iowa.

The Sidney Library is the Bibb Library, moved three miles to a somewhat better situation.

Books wanted for Highland Home Lending Library, Lisbon, New Hampshire: "A Summer in Leslie Goldthwaite's Life," "We Girls," "Real Folks," "Other Girls," "Hitherto," by Mrs Whitney; "Eight Cousins," "Joe's Boys," Miss Alcott; last two volumes of the "Pepper" stories by Margaret Sidney; any by Amelia Barr or E. P. Roe; "In his Name," E. E. Hale; and the periodicals *St. Nicholas, Youth's Companion, Our Dumb Animals, Every Other Sunday, Saturday Evening Transcript.*

Miss Florence A. Langley, West Levant, Maine, asks for *Frank Leslie's* for 1893.

The Cheerful Letter has been a welcome visitor to me for some time, and I wish to thank the kind friend who sends it to me.

I have been an invalid for seven years, and am only thirty-one now. The trials of such a life to one who is filled with eagerness to be "up and doing" are well known to many of you, who, like me, have grown used to pain. Living in the country and unable to buy much to read, I would like to ask if some one will send me something. Would be thankful for any woman's magazine or good stories. Address Mrs. Florence D. Reynolds, Franklinville, Cattaraugus County, New York.

The address of Miss Christie Gabrielson is now Schroyer, Marshall County, Kansas.

Mrs. Carrie Munson, West Andover, Ohio, would be grateful for reading matter. Natural history and Charles Wesley's hymns especially desired.

Miss Mary Stevenson, West Bloomfield, Wisconsin, wishes "Ben-Hur.

Mrs. M. T. Stone, Athens, Tennessee, a mother of eight children, requests reading for the family.

Mrs. L. B. Pease, Schroon Lake, Essex County, New York, asks for "Wide, Wide World," "On the Edge of the Storm," and "Only a Governess."

Mrs. M. M. Butler, Childress, Texas, would like "Hill's Manual," and a "Square note Sacred harp song book."

"Only a Governess," by Rosa N. Cary, is asked for by Miss Fannie Henry, Terryville, Charlotte County, Virginia; Miss Olive Smith, Centre Moriches, New York; Miss Sarah Macy, Wanari, South Dakota; Miss A. M. Strauman, Cleveland, Le Sueur County, Minnesota; Miss Anna Wakefield, Cleveland, Le Sueur County, Minnesota (one copy would be enough for the last two named); Mrs. Ella Hall, New York, Texas.

You cannot fully realize what a great blessing it has been to this backwoods settlement to get reading matter, and every paper that comes here is read and reread until worn out. I want more especially to thank the Sunshine Club for the *Every Other Sunday.* The children will wade the creeks and break the ice, to get the paper. Mrs. Zara L. Cotton, Mt. Ida, Arkansas.

Please remember that a borrowed book does not belong to you, and that you have no right to do anything to it except read it, handling it with care, and return it.

N.B.—Wrap a book up very carefully in sending it by mail. One thickness of paper is insufficient. *One* sending, unprotected, will spoil a book entirely.

Will some one send me the name of a little girl, about twelve years old (an invalid), who would like correspondents? Address Miss L. Freeman Clarke, Jamaica Plain, Mass.

Requests received from the following persons were not sent to the Book Club, as they should have been; and the publication is delayed in consequence (in some cases one month, in some cases two). Mrs. J. L. Cohoon; Miss Nancy Blankinship; Miss Annie Simpson; Mrs. Alice Reeves; Miss Carrie Hance; Mrs. M. M. Butler; Mrs. Nora Colley.

Mrs. Butler, Mrs. C. Webber, Mrs. Rosa M. Poe, are reminded that it is contrary to our rules to ask for anything but books and papers.

THE MOTHERS' COUNCIL.

THE RIGHT WAY TO PUNISH.

(When Jasper was eight years old, his mother could not manage him at all; and his grandfather invited him to come and stay in Lendon with him. His Aunt Gertrude invited him to take a drive with her.)

The beginning of the drive was very pleasant, and both Gertrude and Jasper enjoyed it very much. Gertrude let Jasper drive. . . . There was no harm in yielding to Jasper's caprices, for there was nothing wrong in them. . . .

They were going up a hill where Gertrude said the horse could not go fast, and must not be whipped. Jasper then began to trail the lash of the whip on the ground.

"It is a snake," said Jasper. "Look, Aunt Gertrude, it is a snake!"

"I can't see it very well," said Gertrude. "You may look at it a moment, and then you must take it in."

"Why?" said Jasper. "Why can't I play so with it all the time?"

"I'll tell you, after you have taken it in," said Gertrude. "You may look at it a little longer; and then, when I say the word, you must take it in."

"Now the wheel is running over the snake," said Jasper. "See, Gertrude, see!"

"*Now*," said Gertrude, after pausing a moment, "now you must take it in."

But Jasper did not obey.

"Now, Jasper," said Gertrude, "I can't let you have the whip any longer, because you don't obey me. Give the whip to me."

"No," said Jasper.

Gertrude attempted to take the whip out of Jasper's hand. He struggled, and began to scream. (Gertrude at once abandoned the contest, and Jasper thought he had conquered.)

Gertrude drove on a short distance farther until she came to a wide place, which was convenient for turning the wagon.

"What are you going to do?" said Jasper.

"I am going to turn the wagon round," said Gertrude.

"What for?" asked Jasper.

"To go home," said Gertrude.

"But I don't want to go home," said Jasper, in a whining tone. "I want to ride farther."

"So do I," said Gertrude; "but we must go home."

As she said this, she continued turning the wagon; and at length it had turned entirely round, and the horse was headed toward home.

"*Why* must we go home?" asked Jasper.

"Because you don't obey me," said Gertrude. "I can't ride with a boy who does not obey me."

Jasper now drew in the lash of the whip and threw the whip itself across Gertrude's lap, saying in a petulant manner, "There! take your whip if you want it!"

Gertrude took the whip very quietly, and whipped the horse a little to make him go faster.

"Now I have given you the whip," said Jasper, "I don't see why you need go home."

"Yes," said Gertrude, "this ride is entirely spoiled. We can't ride any more to-day. Some other day I'll take you out again, and then, if you obey me all the time, we can have a good ride; but, if not, you will spoil the ride. Disobeying once spoils the whole ride for that day."

Jasper now thought that Gertrude had only turned the wagon as a feint, in order to threaten and alarm him, and that by means of a little teasing and promising on his part she would easily be induced to turn again, and go on with the ride.

"Come, Aunty," said he. "Turn round again, and go on. I'll be a good boy now,—I certainly will,—and do everything that you say."

Now many persons in such a case as this would have yielded to Jasper's requests and promises, and would have turned back again, saying perhaps,—

"Well, I'll try you for this once; but, if you disobey me *again*, I shall certainly give up the ride altogether."

But such management as this would be very bad. If a boy finds that he can rebel and disobey, and then, when the evil consequences are coming upon him, if he can avert them all by merely promising not to do so again, the effect is to offer a strong inducement to disobey. He will say to himself, "I can disobey once without any harm: it is only for the *second* time that my mother [or my aunt or my teacher, as the case may be] punishes me."

Gertrude paid no attention to Jasper's

entreaties, but went directly home. Of course, Jasper was now in a very bad humor.

"And what are you going to do with me when I get home?" he asked. "Are you going to tell grandpapa of me?"

"No," said Gertrude, "I shall not do anything more about it when I get home. By disobeying me, you have lost this ride; and that is all. To-morrow, if you like, we will try again; and then, I have no doubt, you will be a better boy."

"And what shall I do all the rest of the time to-day?" asked Jasper, in a complaining tone.

"I don't know," replied Gertrude; "but I will help you all I can to have a good time. Perhaps you would like to come up in my room and look at some of my pictures."

Thus you see that, while Gertrude was decided and firm in enforcing the just and proper penalty of Jasper's disobedience,—namely, the loss of the ride,—she stopped short with that, and was ready, after the ride was given up, to treat Jasper just as kindly as if nothing had happened.—*Jacob Abbott, in "Jasper, or the Spoiled Child Recovered."*

THE BIBLE CLASS.

HOW THE WORD, WHICH WAS GOD, WAS MADE FLESH.

John i. 1–14.

The first thing we notice, in reading the first verse of John, is the peculiar use he gives to the term "Word." We ask naturally, What does he intend by it?

"Word" means expression, utterance, speech. Man's word is his utterance, and his utterance is his word. In like manner God's word is his utterance, and his utterance is his word.

The usage of the Old Testament confirms this view. In the Old Testament we read of the eye of God, the ear of God, the arm of God, the hand of God, and the word of God. We have no difficulty in understanding the meaning of these expressions. When we read that "the eye of the Lord is in every place, beholding the evil and the good," we understand by his eye his omniscient knowledge. When we read, "His ear is open to their cry," we know that by this is intended that the Lord listens to prayer. When we read that "his arm brought salvation," we comprehend that this is the power of the Almighty exerted to sustain and bless. When we read that "by the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth," we see clearly that this implies the utterance of his will. We do not argue that the eye is a separate person in the Godhead, nor that the arm is a separate person. Nor is there any more reason to think that the "word" is a separate person than to assert this of the eye, the arm, or the ear.

Before going further, let us consider the following points:—

(*a*) John must of course have expected to be understood by his readers. His first readers were the inhabitants of Asia Minor, where he wrote his Gospel. The term "Word," as used by him, could not have been a new term never used by them, but one with which they were familar: otherwise, they could not have understood what he was speaking of.

(*b*) The term "Word," thus used, is peculiar to John. No one among the writers of the New Testament but him uses the phrase in this absolute sense. The others frequently speak of "the word of God," but not of "the Word" by itself; and, except in this passage, John nowhere uses this expression without some qualifying adjunct.

(*c*) In the Old Testament and the New we find the term "word" used in a sense almost equivalent to this. We find God's word spoken of as a person, running to and fro, leaping down from the heavens, coming to the prophets, creating the heavens and their host, etc.

("The word of God came to Nathan," etc., 1 Chron. xvii. 3. "The word of God came to John in the wilderness," etc., Luke iii. 2. "His word runneth very swiftly," Ps. cxlvii. 15. "The worlds were framed by the word of God," Heb. xi. 3. "By the word of God the heavens were of old," 2 Peter iii. 5. "Thine Almighty word leaped down from heaven from his royal throne," etc., Wisdom of Sol. xviii. 15.)

(*d*) Not only the "word of God" is thus personified in the Bible, but so also are the eye, the ear, the hand, and the arm of God. We have no difficulty in understanding

what is meant in these cases, nor do we ever suppose that personification implies personality.

(*e*) If, therefore, John had simply said, "In the beginning was the word of God, and the word of God was with God, and the word was God himself," the Jews would readily have understood him. They would have understood him to mean that God spoke, or revealed himself in some way, in the beginning; that he manifested his power at that time. But John does not say this: he says "the Word" in a universal form. He must therefore have intended by it revelation in a more universal sense, —not any particular revelation, but the principle of all revelations. He meant to speak of the divine principle, or that energy of the divine nature which causes all manifestation on the part of Deity.

(*f*) We find that among the Jews, in the time of the apostle, there were persons who, by their study of Plato, had been led to take up this very problem of the principle of revelation or manifestation in the Deity. "Why is it and how is it that God reveals himself?" was a question with which Plato and the Platonists, Philo and his followers, and afterwards the Gnostics, were much exercised; and, in their theories, they were inclined to separate God's manifestation from God himself, and to make the revealing energy in the Deity a kind of subordinate and separate being. John probably refers to their opinions, and means to oppose this error, in the first and second verses of the passage.

I am aware that some writers explain "word," or "logos," to mean reason or wisdom, and others explain it to mean power. And it may, doubtless, sometimes mean reason and sometimes power. But these are derived and secondary meanings: the primary meaning is *utterance*. Power may be expressed by the divine word, reason may be expressed by it; but the word itself is neither reason nor power, but the utterance or expression of them. As the principal office of human speech is to express a man's thought, it easily happened, by a common figure, that the term came to mean thought or reason. But the original and primary meaning of logos, or word, we repeat, was utterance or expression; and in the passage before us the primary meaning is the one which best suits the purpose and aim of the writer.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "In the beginning," says the Book of Genesis, "*God created.*" "In the beginning," adds this writer, "*God spoke*"; for creation itself was speech. "The Word was with God": it was nothing separate from him, no emanation from him, no falling away from him, as the Gnostics were beginning to think. But "the Word was God," or, rather, "God was the Word." He was utterance, he was revelation. When he created the universe, he at the same time manifested himself. Creation, therefore, was not something outside of God, or God acting on some material foreign from himself; but it was an utterance of the divine thought, it was the first spoken word of God. This word was, therefore, in the beginning with God. Revelation is no new thing, but an old thing,—old as God himself, who has always spoken.

This is what is intended by the last clause of the first verse. "God was the Word," not "the Word was God" (Θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος is the expression). The object of John was not to prove the Deity of the word, not that revelation was a divine being, but that the Deity was his own revelation. He asserts here, not the Deity of revelation, but the revelation of Deity.

His purpose, as continually shown, and repeated in the second verse, is to assert that revelation is not something which can exist away from God, but only where God himself is. He teaches the immanence of God in his revelation. This is the intention of the second verse, which asserts that revelation was in the beginning with God, and not away from him; and nothing was made which was not itself speech. By the word of the Lord the heavens were made; but the heavens themselves have ever since been a word of the Lord. He said, "Let there be light"; but the light, when it came, came to speak of him. Thus the word is God speaking, and all things are made by God speaking. So the whole inanimate creation, the things made, were the first revelation of God. The visible universe, the order and beauty of heaven and earth, are a divine speech,—are God speaking.

This was his first word.

—*James Freeman Clarke.*

(*To be continued.*)

PRAYER.

Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in thy presence can avail to make!
What heavy burdens from the spirit take,
What parched ground refresh as with a shower!
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,
Stands out in sunny outline, brave and clear.
We kneel, how weak! we rise, how full of power!
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong
Or others,—that we are not always strong?
That we are ever overborne with care?
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy and strength and courage are with thee!

—*R. C. Trench.*

THE WALK WITH GOD.

Oh, not alone in saddest plight
My Lord do I require;
Not only in the thickest fight
And in the sevenfold fire;

Not only when the world invites,
In all its pomp arrayed;
Not only when the Tempter fights,
In all his terrors clad.

I would not for some sorest smart
Keep thy dear grace in store;
Nor for my deeply darkened heart
Reserve thy word's blest lore.

When forth I go, not then alone,
Lord, would I walk with thee;
Not only when the sun goes down
I crave thy company.

Not only for some task sublime
Thy succor I implore;
Not only on some solemn time
Thy holy spirit pour.

Oh, ne'er can I my Helper spare,
I want thee all the way;
I want my Saviour everywhere,
I want thee every day!

Lord, for each daily task of mine
I want thy quickening power;
I want thy smile away to shine
The trouble of each hour.

I want each joy from thee to spring,
Each joy for thee more bright;
Each footstep of thine ordering;
All light seen in thy light.

I want thee through this vale of tears
All up the heavenly road.
Each moment of the eternal years
Shall I possess my God!

—*T. H. Gill.*

HE CHOSE THIS PATH FOR THEE.

He chose this path for thee:
No feeble chance, nor hard, relentless fate,
But love, his love, hath placed thy footsteps here.
He knew the way was rough and desolate,
Knew how thy heart would often sink with fear;
Yet tenderly he whispers, "Child, I see
This path is best for thee."

He chose this path for thee,
Though well he knew sharp thorns would tear thy feet,
Knew how the brambles would obstruct the way,
Knew all the hidden dangers thou wouldst meet,
Knew how thy faith would falter, day by day;
And still the whisper echoed, "Yes, I see
This path is best for thee."

He chose this path for thee,
E'en while he knew the fearful midnight gloom
Thy timid, shrinking soul must travel through,
How towering rocks would oft before thee loom,
And phantoms grim would meet thy frightened view.
Still comes the whisper, "My beloved, I see
This path is best for thee."

He chose this path for thee.
What needst thou more? This sweetest truth to know,—
That all along these strange, bewildering ways,
O'er rocky steeps, and where dark rivers flow,
His loving arms shall bear thee "all the days."
A few steps more, and thou thyself shalt see
This path was best for thee.

—*Selected.*

LOOKING UNTO GOD.

"God's hand in all things, and all things in God's hand."

I look to Thee in every need,
And never look in vain.
I feel thy touch, Eternal Love,
And all is well again.
The thought of thee is mightier far
Than sin and pain and sorrow are.

Discouraged in the work of life,
Disheartened by its load,
Shamed by its failures or its fears,
I sink beside the road;
But let me only think of thee,
And then new heart springs up in me.

Thy calmness bends serene above
My restlessness to still,
Around me flows thy quickening life
To nerve my faltering will;
Thy presence fills my solitude;
Thy providence turns all to good.

Embosomed deep in thy dear love,
Held in thy law, I stand.
Thy hand in all things I behold,
And all things in thy hand.
Thou leadest me by unsought ways,
And turn'st my mourning into praise.

—*S. Longfellow.*

MINISTERING ANGELS.

Brother, the angels say,
Peace to thy heart;
We, too, O brother, have
Been as thou art;
Hope-lifted, doubt-depressed,
Seeing in part,
Tried, troubled, tempted,
Sustained, as thou art.

Brother, they softly say,
Be our thoughts one;
Bend thou with us and pray,
"Thy will be done."
Our God is thy God;
He wills the best;
Trust him as we trusted,
Rest as we rest.

Ye, too, they gently say,
Shall angels be;
Ye, too, O brothers,
From earth be free;
Yet in earth's loved ones
Ye shall have part,
Bearing God's strength and love
To the torn heart.

Thus, when the spirit tried,
Tempted, and worn,
Finding no earthly aid,
Heavenward doth turn,
Come these sweet angel-tones,
Falling like balm,
And on the troubled heart
Steals a deep calm.

WHOM BUT THEE?

Thou Life within my life, than self more near!
Thou veiled Presence infinitely clear!
From all illusive shows of sense I flee,
To find my centre and my rest in thee.

Below all depths thy saving mercy lies,
Through thickest glooms I see thy light arise;
Above the highest heavens thou art not found
More surely than within this earthly round.

Take part with me against these doubts that rise,
And seek to throne thee far in distant skies!
Take part with me against this self that dares
Assume the burden of these sins and cares!

How shall I call thee who art always here?
How shall I praise thee who art still most dear?
What may I give thee save what thou hast given?
And whom but thee have I, in earth or heaven?

—*Eliza Scudder.*

"UNDERNEATH ARE THE EVERLASTING ARMS."

When on my day of life the night is falling,
And in the winds from unsunned spaces blown,
I hear far voices out of darkness calling
My feet to paths unknown;

Thou who hast made my home of life so pleasant,
Leave not its tenant when its walls decay;
O Love divine, O Helper ever present,
Be thou my strength and stay!

Be near me when all else from me is drifting,—
Earth, sky, home pictures, days of shade and shine,
And kindly faces to my own uplifting
The love which answers mine.

I have but thee, my Father; let thy spirit
Be with me then to comfort and uphold;
No gate of pearl, no branch of palm, I merit,
Nor street of shining gold.

Suffice it if—my good and ill unreckoned,
And both forgiven through thy abounding grace—
I find myself by hands familiar beckoned
Unto my fitting place.

Some humble door among thy many mansions,
Some sheltering shade where sin and striving cease,
And flows forever through heaven's green expansions
The river of thy peace.

There from the music, round about me stealing,
I fain would learn the new and holy song,
And find at last, beneath thy trees of healing,
The life for which I long.

—*John G. Whittier.*

"HE FIRST LOVED US."

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
He moved my soul to it who sought for me:
It was not I that found, O Saviour true;
No, I was found of thee.

Thou didst reach forth thy hand and mine enfold;
I walked, and sank not on the storm-vexed sea;
But not so much that I on thee took hold
As by thy hold of me.

I find, I walk, I love; but, ah! the whole
Of love is but my answer, Lord, to thee:
Lord, thou wert long beforehand with my soul,—
Always thou lovedst me.

—*Holy Songs.*

AN AMUSEMENT COLUMN.

[We shall be very glad to print anything suitable for this department, and cordially invite contributions from our friends. One or two have promised us original charades, of which we print in this number the first instalment.]

ANAGRAM.

Each blank must be filled with the same six letters, so arranged as to spell different words.

"The boat sails through the ——
In the —— hours of night.
On board the king doth ——
To the poor man's sorry plight,
Who seeks midst the —— of the court,
By the telling of his tale,
To —— the sympathies of him
Whose power must prevail."

FILLING FULNESS.

Can you put six hundred pins into a sherry-glass brimful of water? Of course not, how absurd, one is tempted to exclaim. Yet try the experiment, and see. Keep the pins away from the edge of the glass, where they would act as conductors and cause the water to overflow. At the first drop of water which trickles down the edge, stop counting and placing the pins. Then make your friends guess the number you put in the glass. *M. R. Case.*

My *first*, although the school-boy's treasure,
Is kicked and beaten without measure;
My *second* is a wary bird
Whose cry on lonely lakes is heard;
My *whole*, though with no wing or feather,
Soars high in air in pleasant weather.
Although now tried for many years,
Its use still causes doubts and fears.
S. C. C.

My *first* is found where land and ocean meet,
It once upon the pulpit found its seat;
My *next* in early times did terror deal
When superstition set its iron heel
On victims guilty found by Bible texts,
And dealt to death because they were suspects;
But now my *whole* we may enjoy together,
At picnics gay in glorious summer weather.
S. F. C.

THE EDITOR'S CORNER.

What shall we lay our emphasis on during this winter? Last spring we made a point of sending books for the library in Richmond; and letters received from Richmond show that that was a useful thing, and probably a great deal of good will be done by the books sent.

Now let us, without neglecting other objects, make an especial point of trying to give really good and efficient help to the libraries in Sidney, Comanche County, Texas, and in Anamosa, Iowa. It is very encouraging that the requests are for good, standard books. In Sidney books of American history and biography are in especial demand, and are asked for by boys and young men.

A kind friend has asked whether our rule is not a little too strict, in regard to giving books *only* where there is no public library and no church library, and giving preference to those who live in the remote West and South over the citizens of small towns in Massachusetts. In the town whence she writes there is only a *small* library in the church building, and most of the books are old.

We do not think our rule too strict. It is a rule that *came of itself*. Here is an illustration. I have a copy of the "Schönberg-Cotta Family." I have ten requests for it. I look them through, and compare them. In the *first* list I put those who are remote from *any* school, church, or library of any kind. Next come those who are in far Western or Southern towns without public libraries and without any church library. Now, shall I give the *first* choice to a town near Boston, *with* a church, *with some* books in the church library? In Boston good standard books may be often bought for very low prices. If the members of that church with the poor library would *each* give twenty-five cents once a year, the library would be well replenished. Even a subscription of *ten* cents apiece would do a great deal. For $2.50 *ten* volumes of Mrs. Ewing's charming stories may be bought at De Wolfe & Fiske's. Dickens's works and many others may be procured at low prices.

Our books, the *Cheerful Letter* books, are: *first*, for those who *cannot* obtain any good reading otherwise; next for those who make them the nucleus of a free library in towns where there are few books of any kind; third, come the religious books offered to ministers, and so of use to those whom they instruct.

IMPORTANT NOTICES.

There will be a meeting of the Cheerful Letter Exchange on Friday, January 3, at 10.30 A.M., at 25 Beacon Street, Boston.

The editor calls especial attention to the requests for libraries. Good standard books and magazines will do more good there than anywhere.

By way of giving a Christmas character to this number, we reprint several of the poems in early numbers of *The Cheerful Letter*, now out of print.

THE ATTENTION OF ALL READERS OF "THE CHEERFUL LETTER" IS CALLED TO THE FOLLOWING NOTICE: —

It is contrary to the rules of the Cheerful Letter Exchange to allow any one to make use of our paper by addressing letters, asking for money, clothing, or other articles, to those whose names are printed in the paper. This prohibition includes requests to borrow money and the offering of articles for sale. The name of any person who infringes this rule will be dropped from our list; and any one who receives a request of this description is desired by our Executive Committee to return no answer, but to enclose the letter at once to our secretary, Miss Langmaid.

Our Book Club department has grown so large that we shall ask of all who in the future write to us for books to send the name of some minister as a reference,— when possible, the minister of the church to which they belong.

We fear that some of our subscribers have the impression that by subscribing for *The Cheerful Letter* they will be sure to receive books. The Book Club has proved an attractive department of our paper; and many of our subscribers are interested in sending books to those who are unable otherwise to obtain them. But we engage only to keep the Book Club open for offers and requests, and that under certain conditions.

We remind all who send parcels or boxes with books, papers, etc., to correspondents or to libraries, that it is absolutely necessary to write at the same time to the receiver, enclosing the receipt which shows that the express or freight charges on the package have been paid. For want of this precaution, valuable packages have never been received. It is not probable that any of our *Cheerful Letter* friends send packages without prepaying them, but it is a common mistake of the express agents to charge the receiver for a prepaid package.

N.B.—PLEASE READ DIRECTIONS AT BEGINNING OF BOOK CLUB BEFORE WRITING FOR BOOKS.

The editor receives nearly every day notes which should go to the Book Club secretary (Mrs. Nichols), the treasurer (Miss Howe), or the secretary (Miss Langmaid). This greatly and needlessly increases her work. She would therefore request all readers of *The Cheerful Letter before* they address her to be kind enough to READ THE FOLLOWING

DIRECTIONS.

SECRETARY OF CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE, —Miss Bertha Langmaid, 2 Gordon Terrace, Brookline, Mass.

TREASURER OF CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE, —Miss Louise Howe, 53 Linden Street, Brookline, Mass., or 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.

EDITOR OF "CHEERFUL LETTER,"—Miss L. Freeman Clarke, Jamaica Plain, Mass.

SECRETARY OF BOOK CLUB OF CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE,—Mrs. W. B. Nichols, 3 Webster Street, Allston, Mass.

Subscriptions and renewals may be sent to the treasurer as above. The subscription is fifty cents a year.

Notice that requests for membership and for correspondents go to Miss Langmaid, our secretary; requests for books and offers of books, to Mrs. Nichols; and to Miss Clarke only articles for insertion in the paper (not Book Club matter). All such material should be written on *one side only* of the paper, and sent by the first of the month *before* that in which it is printed.

Those not able to subscribe for the paper, but desiring to receive it, may do so by writing to Miss Louise Howe, as above. Please give full name and address. Many of our members take the paper, in order to send it to those who are not able to subscribe for it.

Will all subscribers or receivers of *The Cheerful Letter*, whose copy does not come regularly or comes not correctly addressed, be kind enough to notify Miss Louise Howe, as above.

Send all notices of *changes of address and requests for discontinuance* to Miss Howe. Please do not send these notices to the editor, as it causes delay in the correction.